

Dear Friends,

Today marks Holocaust Remembrance Day. Ten years ago when I had the privilege of traveling to Israel, our tour group visited Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem. One of the most moving, if not brutal, experiences is seeing the Children's Memorial, which honors and remembers the over 1.5 million children who died at the hands of the Nazis.

A description of the exhibit reads, "Memorial candles, a customary Jewish tradition to remember the dead, are reflected infinitely in a dark and somber space, creating the impression of millions of stars shining in the firmament. The names of murdered children, their ages and countries of origin can be heard in the background."

One of the remarkable things about the death camps was the ability of the incarcerated children to maintain hope for freedom and transformation. When allied forces liberated the camps and entered the buildings where the children were housed, the military personnel were met by a stunning sight. On the walls, the children had drawn and inscribed pictures of flowers and butterflies, and butterflies breaking free of their cocoons.

Many people – young and old – in varying cultures, circumstances, and eras have laid claim to the mythic and meaningful power of the butterfly. It has long been a Christian symbol of resurrection in view of the transformation of caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly. What appears dead is not dead, and out of the seemingly lifeless cocoon comes a beautiful new creature.

This belief is expressed in the evocative hymn by Natalie Sleeth, "In the Bulb, There Is a Flower." The first verse goes like this:

*In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;  
in cocoons, a hidden promise; butterflies will soon be free!  
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be,  
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.*

The Easter message affirms that Jesus' empty tomb gave way to resurrection.

What had been concealed was now revealed.

What had been hidden was now proclaimed.

What had appeared dead was now full of life.

What had been seen alone by God was now evident to the whole world.

God sees – and calls us to see – the inherent worth, beauty, and preciousness of every child. As we grieve for the children of the Holocaust, let us open our eyes that we may protect children today from whatever danger threatens. Let us remember the great hope the imprisoned children maintained that we might honor their memories by doing what we can to feed, clothe, educate, nurture, shelter, provide healthcare, defend, and safeguard the children of today – and of tomorrow.

Yours in Resurrection Faith,  
Jane